

Considering Universal Design for Assignments in Secondary Schools

Communication and Language
Conference 2012

Setting Assignments

- Law says: All students will be treated *on the same basis as* a student without a disability

(Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992)

Making Assignments Accessible for All Students

Participants:

Dulwich High School of Visual Arts and Design teaching and executive staff

Sydney Region Student Services – Criss Moore and Mary Anne Kunzman

University of Sydney – Dr David Evans

Dulwich High School of Visual Arts and Design

- Enrolment of 611 students
- Specialist school – Specialist visual arts faculty shared with National Art School and Enmore School of Design
- Support Unit
- has a larger than average number of students with special needs enrolled in the mainstream
- 22 Aboriginal students (6% of the schools population)
- 38% of students who have LBOTE

Purpose of the Project

- Provide access to assignment requirements for all students and the school community
- Further skill teachers to provide access and participation in assignments for all students
- Provide means for engagement and success in learning for all students

Some behaviours present in the classroom

- Unable to follow verbal instructions
- Frequently “in trouble”
- Reluctant to engage in classroom discussion
- The use of vernacular language
- Frequent grammatical errors
- Delays in responding to questions resulting in students saying wrong things at the wrong time

Classroom experiences for the student

- Low self-esteem
- Cumulative sense (and expectation) of failure
- Depression, anger, frustration, withdrawal, aggression
- Use of inappropriate coping mechanisms (e.g. bullying, copying, truancy)

Experiences for teachers and parents

Making teaching, learning and assessment activities accessible for all students:

- Avoids potential conflict between students and their teachers when work is not completed to the teachers expectation
- Avoids potential conflict between students and their parents/caregivers who may experience frustration at their inability to complete set work

Planning for the project

School Principal requested support through Students Services

- School Learning Support Team
- Student input
- Parent input
- Teacher input
- School Plan and other Documents
- Research Recommendations
- Academic partner

Data from the interviews and observations

Positives

1. Assignment content considered interesting and syllabus content considered suitable by teachers, students and parents

Issues

1. Minimal assignment completion
2. Difficulties comprehending homework tasks – Students and parents

Decision

- Universal design: consistent assessment proforma used by all KLA's when creating assessment tasks (presents consistency to students)
- principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn.

Considerations

- Understanding motivation and anxiety
- Self awareness and empathy
- Memory and thinking skills
- Reading (both decoding words and understanding intended message)
- Vocabulary
- Writing

Our Approach

**Explicit teaching of skills
and strategies needed for
literacy**

**Learning cues and
strategies to help all
students succeed**

Simplify worksheets

- Use specifically sort out visuals –
Some schools build a bank for each topic to ensure a base of visual resources that will be built on by each teacher who uses the resource.
- Plan scaffolds at differing levels that students may choose from.

How to help in the classroom

- Use visual stimuli as learning cues to support students
- Provide clear written instructions
- Explain the purpose of activities and allow students time to comprehend instructions
- Restate and emphasise key points/information
- Negotiate other ways for students to demonstrate achievement of outcomes

Impact on teaching

- Dramatic increase in the submission of assessment tasks
- Students know what they will achieve by completing the task due to the explicit nature of the assessment sheet and marking criteria
- Simple modifications by teachers to maximise student achievement in the task

Where to next?

- Provide positive reinforcement to teaching staff on how they can modify assessment tasks to assist all students
- Remind teachers that simple modifications can have a significant influence on student achievement
- Recognise student achievement and celebrate success with students and their teachers

YEAR 8 GEOGRAPHY

GLOBAL GEOGRAPHICAL ISSUES - ASSESSMENT TASK

AIM: To make a magazine article about a *global geographical issue*.

You will be divided into groups with 3-4 students in each group. Each group will be given a different *global geographical issue*.



Each group will use the internet and print sources (books, magazines, newspapers etc.) to research their issue.



Your group will use your research to make a two A4 page magazine article about the issue.

IN YOUR ARTICLE, YOU MUST INCLUDE:

- A short description of the issue
- Find 2 examples of the issue around the world
 - show them on a map ☐
 - describe each example ☐
- Discuss the human impacts
 - What are humans doing to cause the issue? ☐
 - What are the impacts on the environment and on humans? ☐
- What can people (active citizens) do to help reduce the harm caused by the issue? ☐
- Include images (photos, diagrams, graphs, drawings etc.). ☐

Spatial

Ecological

Active

DUE DATE: You will be given **3-4 lessons** to complete the article.

Marks

1. The mark you receive for your article will make up **10%** of your Half Yearly assessment mark.
2. Each group must then do an oral presentation on their *geographical issue* to the class. Every person in the group must participate in the presentation. The presentation length should be 3-5 minutes.
3. The mark for your presentation will make up **5%** of your Half Yearly assessment mark.

Student Name _____ Group Number _____

Geographical Issue _____ Presentation Date _____

COLD, DRY AND WINDY

Comprehension Questions

Step 1: Read the topic sentence of each paragraph on page 176-177

Step 2: Read the each question and choose which paragraph (1 to 7) you think the answer will be found in. Write the number of the paragraph in the box on the left.

Step 3: Answer the questions.

1. What are some of the average wind speeds that have been recorded in Antarctica?

2. What temperature does Antarctica get to in summer?

3. What does the wind carry with it as it comes off the polar plateau?

4. Where does drinking water in Antarctica come from? Why?

5. What happens to the Sun's heat as it reaches Antarctica? Does this affect how hot it gets in Antarctica?

6. Define the word: sastrugi.

7. What is the main reason for Antarctica's climatic extremes?
